Blog



Pope John Paul II greets the Rev. Jesse Jackson at the end of the pope's weekly audience at the Vatican June 23, 1999. Jackson, a towering civil rights icon, died at age 84 Feb. 17. (OSV News photo/Vatican)



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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*



The Leadership Conference of Women Religious said it gives thanks for the life of civil rights champion Rev. Jesse Jackson who died Feb. 17. Jackson's life "embodied a prophetic commitment to justice, dignity, and the sacred worth of every person," LCWR said in a statement.

Jackson, who died at 84, gave courageous witness to the Gospel call to transform unjust structures and to stand with those kept on the margins of society, the statement said. LCWR lauded his practice of nonviolent protest in the style of his mentor Martin Luther King Jr.

"Throughout his life, Rev. Jackson challenged the nation to live more fully into its democratic promise. His voice, presence, and tireless advocacy for civil rights, economic justice, and political participation expanded the moral imagination of this country and strengthened movements for equality and inclusion," the statement said.

"As women religious committed to the work of gospel justice and systemic transformation, we give thanks for his prophetic leadership and faithful perseverance. In this moment of loss, we renew our commitment to continue the work to which he dedicated his life — building communities of justice and peace where truth is spoken, human dignity is honored, and liberty is real for all."

Sisters from the Americas take part in leadership training

More than 60 sisters from Latin America and the U.S. took part in a conference to help them better serve vulnerable populations as well as improve leadership skills.

The Inspiring Leadership, Networks of Hope and Service conference Jan. 28 and 29 at the University of Monterrey in Mexico featured Company of Mary Sr. Liliana Franco, past president of the Latin American Confederation of Religious Men and Women, known as CLAR.

She presented a leadership model inspired by the parable of the sower, saying the vocation of women religious is the same: a life of service and hope.



Sisters from Latin America and the U.S. took part in leadership training at the University of Monterrey, Mexico Jan. 28 and 29 to help them carry out their ministries. The Inspiring Leadership, Networks of Hope and Service conference featured Company of Mary Sr. Liliana Franco, past president of CLAR. (Courtesy of Congregation of Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word)

"When you stand before the earth, when you stand in front of a piece of land, you have only two options: to be a sower or to be a gravedigger. It is up to us to sow," Franco said.

The gathering was organized by the Hilton Foundation, a major funder of Global Sisters Report, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Hearts that Educate A.C., and the Initiative to Develop Leadership for Women Religious.

In addition to sisters from Mexico and the U.S., sisters from Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela also attended. The conference bestows on sisters who attended a certificate for administrative, operative and leadership skills.

Sisters call on Trump to apologize for racist video of Obamas

Sisters of Mercy called out U.S. President Donald Trump for sharing a video on social media in early February depicting a former U.S. president and his wife as apes.

"The racist video shared recently on social media by the White House depicting former U.S. President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama is just the latest example of the use of offensive messages to dehumanize groups of people in the United States," they said in a statement released by the Sisters of Mercy Leadership Team Feb. 12. "That it came during Black History Month, a time to honor the contributions of Black Americans to this country, is an additional insult."

The sisters joined Catholic leaders as well as civic and political leaders, including some from the president's party, in asking Trump to apologize. The video was deleted from his account, but the president said he would not apologize and said "I didn't make a mistake" because someone else had posted the video.

The Mercy sisters said they are committed to eliminating personal and institutional racism and dismantling oppressive structures.

"We expect our public officials to do the same," they said. "Let us speak the truth in love, and grow to the full maturity of Christ, the head. Through Christ, the whole body grows. With the proper functioning of each member, firmly joined together by each supporting ligament, the body builds itself up in love."

In an interview aired Feb. 14 on YouTube, former president Obama said he believes some Americans "find this behavior troubling."

"There doesn't seem to be any shame about this among people who used to feel like you had to have some sort of decorum and a sense of propriety and respect for the office," he added.

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Adrian Dominican Sisters plead with immigration officials to stop detaining children

Adrian Dominican Sisters said they are deeply distressed by the mass detention of children at the hands of U.S. immigration officials and they're calling on enforcement officers and the Trump administration to stop the practice of capturing and detaining "the most vulnerable in our society."

"This cruel hindering of little children by our own government is unconscionable," they said.

In a Feb. 16 statement they called attention to data from the nonprofit news site The Marshall Project, which published a story in December saying that "at least 3,800 children under age 18, including 20 infants, have been booked since Trump took office."

They referenced the January detention of Liam Conejo Ramos, a 5-year-old from Minnesota who was taken into a car by immigration officials who were seeking to detain his father. The family, originally from Ecuador, has filed for asylum in the U.S. but the case has not been decided. Liam and his father were taken into custody and flown to a detention center in Texas but were later released and returned to Minnesota.

Recently, a 2-month-old baby became the center of attention when he was deported after developing bronchitis during detention at an immigration center in Texas.

"Infants, toddlers, and school-age girls and boys have been and continue to be apprehended from their homes, schools, and neighborhoods by armed and masked ICE agents and then transported to distant warehouse detention centers," the statement said. "The terror and trauma these children are experiencing at the hands of our own government is shocking to the conscience — and an egregious breach of our nation's legal and moral values of ensuring child protection.

"As American citizens and women of faith, we are alarmed and deeply distressed by the inhumane capture and detention of more than 3,800 children by our government since the Trump Administration took office last year."